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The Multi-Dimensional Stories of Displacement, Moving and Social Mixing in Regent Park

Samira's Story

2005: Samira was born

2007 to 2012: Samira's first *home* was at Oak St.

2013: Samira attended Duke of York School

2013 to Present: Samira moved into another apartment in Regent Park and continues to live there

2014 to 2018: Duke of York School was closed and demolished

2014 to Present: Samira now attends a French immersion school

Mid-2014 to 2017: Samira's friend moved out of her home. She would not come back.

2017 to 2018: Samira's friend's house was demolished

2018 to Present: A catholic school will be built at the site of Duke of York School

Notes on timeline from conversations with Samira:

- "The new building is practically done, but I don't think they're gonna ask us to move back"
- "The buildings are ok, I don't pay much attention to the design"
- "I watched all the movies during summer in the Regent Park Festival, I really liked it"
- "I don't see [my current apartment] as a home, it is just a place to live as long as I am with my family"
- "My school was demolished, and will become a Catholic school"
- "I am Samira and I am 14 years old. I've lived in Regent Park since I was born. This is my part of my experience of displacement and social mixing since the revitalization started"
- "I don't talk to my neighbours as much as my mother does"
- "My close friend still lives in Regent Park, but is far from where I live"
- "I'm pretty sure they're demolishing all the buildings because [they] need the money, without focusing on what they're actually doing"
- "I remember someone wanting to move out, so she stayed until she was the only one left in the building"
- "I don't remember much of my childhood, maybe if nothing had changed I would remember more"

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News Coverage

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1946 to 1947: The Globe and Mail

- Title: Regent Park Residents Ponder Future: Subsidized Housing Units to Replace 60-Year-Old Toronto Slums
- Hopes Rise for Rehabilitation of the Regent Park Area
- Chosen as the site of Canada's first large-scale venture in urban revitalization

April 2005: The Globe and Mail

- Title: This time, let's get it right at Regent Park
- "The project to revitalize the decaying neighbourhood could well become a showcase of the 21st century's best architectural ideas and urban visions. Seeing that the architects and planners actually get it right this time will require close attention by us all, zero tolerance of any architectural proposals that are bland, mediocre or routine, and a pitbull-like clamp on the leg of TCHC until the agency completes in Regent Park, one of the most vibrant new residential communities in the world"
- Link to Article:
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/real-estate/this-time-lets-get-it-right-at-regent-park/article978340/>

February 2007: The Globe and Mail

- Title: Can mix subsidized and market-rate housing work?
- It started with the best of intentions after Second World War - a community Toronto's not-so-well-off could live a life without having to worry about devious slumlords. But the public housing project went off the rails almost the moment it was completed."

November 2007: The Globe and Mail

- Title: Rebirth of Regent Park under way.
- What defines a neighbourhood - people, streets, a coffee shop, a grocery store, a bank branch, even a swimming pool, is coming into view at Regent Park. Construction activity now marks the first phase of a long-term renewal of the aging low-income housing projects"
- Link to Article:
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/rebirth-of-torontos-regent-park-under-way/article1088884/>

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November 2007: The Globe and Mail

- Title: Regent Park Revitalization Socially Progressive or Trojan Horse?: Moving people around like pawns
- Ms. Ahmed is looking forward to going back. While many Torontonians consider Regent Park, in this former state, to be a horror of crime and drugs, for many it is home, with a sense of community 'enough so that 97% of displaced tenants have indicated they want to return.' 'Where I am now, I don't know anybody. Where I was, my community surrounded me,' said Ms. Ahmed, a 32-year-old Somali immigrant. "It has caused a lot of stress, and people are depressed and need counselling."
- Link to Article:
<https://nationalpost.com/posted-toronto/regent-park-revitalization-draws-mixed-reactions-from-residents>

No date: The Globe and Mail

- Title: Families set to move into new Regent Park in April
- About 390 families who were relocated to nearby housing will have the option to take up residence in any 500 units that will be ready by spring

No date: The Globe and Mail

- Title: The Loganathans move back to a new Regent Park
- The Loganathan family's urban odyssey began almost four years ago, when they moved out of one cockroach-infested building and into another that was even worse. Yesterday, the Loganathan's journey came to a happy ending when they became the first to move into the grandset experiment in the history of Canadian social housing - the \$1-billion redevelopment of Regent Park.

October 2010: National Post

- Title: Regent Park welcomes its first grocery store
- The opening of a new grocery store might not be a big deal in wealthy neighbourhoods, but for residents in Regent Park it has been years in the making.
- Link to Article:
<https://nationalpost.com/posted-toronto/regent-park-welcomes-its-first-grocery-story>

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March 2012: The Sun

- Title: TCHC residents feel like they were 'duped' in Regent Park redevelopment
- They were led to believe by Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) officials that they'd have every right to return to an affordable unit in the newly revitalized Regent Park.
- Link to Article:
<https://torontosun.com/2012/03/28/tchc-residents-feel-like-the-were-duped-in-regent-park-redevelopment/wcm/a5998a0a-be09-430c-8dde-764624aad32a>

March 2012: The Sun

- Title: Movin' on up in Regent Park
- The social engineers and their media cheerleaders were positively tripping over each other in early 2005 to describe the daring new vision to raze and rebuild the socially isolated Regent Park into a mixed-income, mixed-use community. The poor would be 'fully integrated into the fabric' of the surrounding.
- Link to Article:
<https://torontosun.com/2012/03/25/movin-on-up-in-regent-park/wcm/d960bfc6-7b5f-44f1-8e1f-cf5ada32bb0a>

April 2012: National Post

- Title: Regent Park revitalization draws mixed reactions from residents
- Residents of Toronto's Regent Park called reporters to their neighbourhood Monday morning to give out free coffee and praise the neighbourhood's \$1-billion, 15-year revitalization - but at least two residents at the news conference questioned the redevelopment effort.
- Link to Article:
<https://nationalpost.com/posted-toronto/regent-park-revitalization-draws-mixed-reactions-from-residents>

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March 2012: Cision

- Title: The Daniels Corporation responds to inaccurate allegations regarding the Regent Park Revitalization
- "It is unfortunate that the Toronto Sun is attempting to discredit a public/private partnership celebrated around the world as the model by which challenged urban neighbourhoods can be re-imagined and re-created. Most importantly, it is a shame that the historic work and incredible accomplishments of local residents who have worked tirelessly since 1995 to transform their community are being undermined."
- Link to Article:
<https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/the-daniels-corporation-responds-to-inaccurate-allegations-regarding-the-regent-park-revitalization-509936071.html>

March 2012: Huffington Post

- Title: Canada's largest social housing project favours the rich?
- The focus of the fuss over the Regent Park revitalization is that Councillor Pam McConnell snagged one of the prime, 1200-square foot condos for \$400,000-plus, while many former residents were moved out with the assurance that they could return -- a promise that was reneged on.
- Link to Article:
https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/peter-worthington/regent-park-toronto_b_1387866.html?utm_hp_ref=ca-regent-park

June 2012: Toronto Star

- Title: Regent Park revitalization: Has it created an 'us versus them' dynamic?
- Our research strongly suggests that the ambitious program to rebuild Regent Park with an influx of higher-income newcomers has had unintended and even negative effects on community networks and, consequently, on crime and violence in the neighbourhood.
- Link to Article:
https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2012/06/16/regent_park_revitalization_has_it_created_an_us_versus_them_dynamic.html

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February 2013: The Globe and Mail

- Title: What's it like growing up in Regent Park? Ask them.
- Trevlyn Kennedy, 19, left, Ashley Fraser, 17, centre and Mustafa Ahmed, right. I think the revitalization was what threw it off for me because it becomes open and -- I don't want to put it in a way where outsiders weren't allowed to come in -- but you could just tell the outsiders or not [before]; you could tell if there was a threat or something. I felt more secure when the revitalization was not happening. It became an unfamiliar ground to work around.
- Link to Article: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/whats-it-like-growing-up-in-regent-park-ask-them/article8986191/>

May 2013: Toronto Star

- Title: Regent Park residents find relocation unfair
- "Right now, Amal Ahmed can walk to her classes at Ryerson University or to her baby daughter's doctor appointments. Her mother attends a women's group at the health centre down the street, and she can rely on her longtime neighbours in Regent Park."
- Link to Article: https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2014/05/03/regent_park_residents_find_relocation_unfair.html

February 2014: Globe and Mail

- Title: Regent Park residents feel happier and safer with new homes.
- More than 90 percent of those surveyed said their home is now a good place to live, up from just over 70 percent in the period before they moved. Over all, the 59 people interviewed for the study reported remarkably high levels of satisfaction with the new homes.
- Link to Article: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/regent-park-residents-satisfied-with-new-homes-study-says/article16986854/>

April 2014: TVO

- Title: "Happy But Not Happy" in Regent Park
- "...many people are quite happy with the redevelopment so far. But satisfaction with the project is by no means unanimous."
- Link to Article: <https://www.tvo.org/article/regent-parks-redevelopment-part-four>

Yellow highlight: year

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October 2014: Global News

- Title: Single mom refuses to leave Regent Park building slated for demolition
- Candice McGowan is the last person left in a Toronto Community Housing building that she refuses to move out of until she has somewhere else to go. She's waiting for the TCHC to find her a new home. The building was supposed to be prepared to be demolished Monday. But contractors have been moved to another building because McGowan, concerned she has nowhere else to go, refuses to leave.
- Link to Article:
<https://globalnews.ca/news/1601147/single-mom-refuses-to-leave-regent-park-building-slated-for-demolition/>

November 2015: Toronto Star

- Title: Preserving Regent Park's history amid revitalization
- When the machines ripped apart the rowhouses of 44 Wyatt Walk, the walls told the stories of former residents. "Love this house," wrote a young girl on the pink wall of her old bedroom. "May God Bless us all in our new home," her mother added.
- Link to Article:
<https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/11/18/preserving-regent-parks-history-amid-revitalization.html>

February 2016: The New York Times

- Title: In Toronto, a Neighbourhood in Despair Transforms Into a Model of Inclusion
- Her face framed by a yellow hijab, Idil Hassan watched her young daughter splash with other children at the Regent Park Aquatic Center, an architectural jewel of glass, wood and chlorine in the middle of Canada's largest housing project.
- Link to Article:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/29/world/americas/in-toronto-a-neighborhood-in-despair-transforms-into-a-model-of-inclusion.html>

May 2016: Toronto Star

- Title: 5 ways Regent Park's revitalization is a game-changer
- 1. Awesome amenities. 2. Unlocked grid. 3. Commercial comeback. 4. Housing mix. 5. Full integration.
- Link to Article:
<https://www.thestar.com/life/homes/2016/05/09/5-ways-regent-parks-revitalization-is-a-game-changer.html>

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December 2016: The Guardian

- Title: Inside Regent Park: Toronto's test case for public-private gentrification
- Once notorious for bedbugs and crime, the Regent Park social housing development has been transformed with a \$1-billion revitalization -- and more than a few luxury apartments. But has it managed to avoid social cleansing?
- Link to Article:
<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/dec/08/inside-regent-park-torontos-test-case-for-public-private-gentrification>

January 2017: BlogTO

- Title: Remaining Redevelopment of Regent Park Now at Risk
- The city of Toronto's looking for contributions from the federal and provincial governments to help pay for the third phase of this massive redevelopment project. According to the Star, the city is \$108 million short.
- Link to Article:
<https://www.blogto.com/city/2017/01/remaining-redevelopment-regent-park-now-risk/>

January 2017: Toronto Sun

- Title: Regent Park revitalization \$107 million in the hole
- The \$107-million city bailout required to finish Phase 3 is only the start with another \$182-million funding shortfall predicted (on a preliminary basis) for Phases 4 and 5. The costs for the outstanding Phase 3 units range from \$294,853 to \$301,049 per unit.
- Link to Article:
<https://torontosun.com/2017/01/29/regent-park-revitalization-107-million-in-the-hole/wcm/90ffc373-c6f7-4e17-917a-9068d7c63c60>

May 2018: CBC

- Title: Decision quietly made by Toronto Community Housing sparks concern in Regent Park
- TCH acknowledges it should have told residents sooner new developers could be moving in. It's been nearly five years since the public housing agency's board of directors scrapped an existing contract with the Daniels Corporation, opening up the final two phases of construction to new developers. But residents say they only learned about the move in the last three weeks.
- Link to Article:
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/regent-park-revitalization-toronto-community-1.4664811>

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August 2018: Toronto.com

- Title: Latest piece of Regent Park redevelopment is starting to rise
- “The redevelopment has served as a template for other revitalization projects in public housing neighbourhoods across Toronto.”
- Link to Article:
<https://www.toronto.com/news-story/8853976-latest-piece-of-regent-park-redevelopment-is-starting-to-rise/>

January 2019: Toronto Star

- Title: Regent Park community reflects and regroupes as final chapter of rebuild begins
- “Sureya Ibrahim stands on an ice sidewalk in Regent Park and surveys a neighbourhood she fears is headed toward an uncertain future”
- Link to Article:
https://www.thestar.com/news/city_hall/2019/01/27/regent-park-community-reflects-and-regroups-as-final-chapter-of-rebuild-begins.html

February 2019: Toronto Star

- Title: Regent Park residents say they can't access their neighbourhood pool. City data backs them up.
- https://www.thestar.com/news/city_hall/2019/02/02/regent-park-residents-say-they-cant-access-their-neighbourhood-pool-city-data-backs-them-up.html

March 2019: CTV News

- Title: Demolition of Regent Park buildings 'brings a lot of memories back
- Elsa Keklu spent a lot of time at one of the Regent Park buildings when her kids were younger
- Link to Article:
<https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/demolition-of-regent-park-buildings-brings-a-lot-of-memories-back-residents-say-1.4319290>

Yellow highlight: year

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Movies and Documentaries

Yellow highlight: year

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1953: Farewell Oak Street

“This documentary presents a before-and-after picture of people in a large-scale public housing project in Toronto. Due to a housing shortage, they were forced to live in squalid, dingy flats and ramshackle dwellings on a crowded street in Regent Park North; now they have access to new, modern housing developments designed to offer them privacy, light and space.”

Link to film: https://www.nfb.ca/film/farewell_oak_street/

1994: Return to Regent Park

“Ten thousand people live in Toronto’s Regent Park, Canada’s first large-scale public housing project. Built in a spirit of post-WWII optimism that social problems could be corrected through urban renewal, Regent Park replaced a working-class neighbourhood with a modern, park-like community of apartment buildings.

But, forty years later, it had become a paradigm of city planning failure. The physical isolation of Regent Park from the surrounding community had created a unique ghetto-like environment. Within its confines, many residents felt as if they are under siege by an army of outsiders who were using the park as a haven for drugs, prostitution and violent crime.

Frustrated by the apparent “benign neglect” of the Metro Housing Authority, groups of Regent Park residents banded together into committees organized by residents-turned-social-activists. They became persuasive advocates of the concept that Regent park required radical physical redevelopment in order to be successfully reintegrated within the larger social community.

Bay Weyman let the people of Regent Park tell their own story of desperation and hope. Featuring interviews with residents, activists, community organizers, local politicians, academic planners, and the police, the film compresses three stories into one: the failure of traditional urban renewal schemes, the impact of drugs and crime on an enclosed environment, and the positive effects of social redevelopment in which people are empowered with a newborn self-respect, changing the way they think about themselves and their community.” [Link to film/trailer not available.](#)

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2009: *Invisible City*

“*Invisible City* is a moving story of two boys from Regent Park crossing into adulthood – their mothers and mentors rooting for them to succeed; their environment and social pressures tempting them to make poor choices. Turning his camera on the often ignored inner city, Academy-award nominated director Hubert Davis sensitively depicts the disconnection of urban poverty and race from the mainstream.”

Link to film: <https://vimeo.com/157753809>

2017: *My Piece of the City*

“*MY PIECE OF THE CITY* follows a group of remarkable young artists in Toronto’s inner-city community of Regent Park where they explore all they have lost and gained as a new world builds around them.”

Link to trailer: <https://vimeo.com/237568333>

2017: *The Stairs: Tales from Regent Park*

“*The Stairs* follows the stories of three remarkable people who use their experiences surviving decades of street involvement to help their community. Their five year journey, full of triumphs and heartbreaks, reveals a world often misunderstood. Each works for harm reduction agencies, serving clients without judgment. That notion is central to their jobs, as well as to them as people, and to my film. – Hugh Gibson, filmmaker”

Link to film: <https://www.tvo.org/article/the-stairs-tales-from-regent-park>

Yellow highlight: year

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Orange highlight: Full Citation

Construction

Yellow highlight: year

1995: Tenants approach Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) about Revitalization

2003: City Council approves the proposed plans

2005: Revitalization begins

2006: TCHC selects Daniels as development partner for Phase 1 through 3

2007: City Council passes Social Development Plans, developed with residents

2009: Phase 2 construction begins

2012: Phase 1 completed

2014: Phase 3 construction begins

2018: Phase 2 completed; Developer selected for Phases 4 and 5

2021: Phase 3 completed (estimate)

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Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) CEOs

Yellow highlight: year

2002 to 2009: Derek Ballantyne, CEO

2009 to 2011: Keiko Nakamura, Interim CEO

2012 to 2014: Gene Jones, CEO

2014 to 2017: Greg Spearn, Interim CEO

2017 to 2019: Kathy Milsom, CEO

Yellow highlight: year

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Green highlight: Link

Orange highlight: Full Citation

Literature

2004:

Lees, L. (2014). Gentrification and Social Mixing: Towards an Inclusive Urban Renaissance? *Urban Studies*, 45(12), 2449-2470.

“There is a poor evidence base for the widespread policy assumption that gentrification will help increase social mix, foster social mixing and thereby increase the social capital and social cohesion of inner city communities.”

2007:

Toronto Community Housing. (2007). Social Development Plan Executive Summary. Toronto, ON: Author. Retrieved from <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-7300.pdf>

“Regent park is being rebuilt as a diverse, mixed-income community in an open and integrated neighbourhood.”

‘The redevelopment of Regent Park is a priority for the people who live and work there, but it also reflects a widespread commitment to ‘city building’ and the growth of healthy, sustainable communities across Toronto.’

2009:

Vaughan, J. (2009, March 21). Little Mosque in the Basement. *The Globe and Mail Inc.* Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/little-mosque-in-the-basement/article20445735/>

“Organizational networks, family networks -- when you put them back, are they going to be exactly the same? No. But you have to work with them so when they go back everything can be as close to before as possible.”

Yellow highlight: year

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Blue highlight: Title

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Orange highlight: Full Citation

2011:

Laughlin, D.L., and Johnson, L.C. (2011). Defining and exploring public space: perspectives of young people from Regent Park, Toronto. *Children's Geographies*, 9(3-4), 439-456.

"The prospect of losing friends and family as neighbours caused concern about whether they would still be able to have fun and feel like they belong in Regent Park."

2014:

August, M. (2014). Challenging the Rhetoric of Stigmatization: The Benefits of Concentrated Poverty in Toronto's Regent Park. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 46(6), 1317-1333.

"The mixed income approach to revitalization being undertaken in RP is part of a global trend for addressing 'problem' public housing projects or council estates."

2016:

Hayes, D. (2016, December 8). Inside Regent Park: Toronto's Test Case for Public-Private Gentrification. *Guardian News & Media Limited*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/dec/08/inside-regent-park-torontos-test-case-for-public-private-gentrification>

"Some have chosen not to suffer yet another move, and have stayed in their new neighbourhoods."

"'Right-of-return policy' -- every former tenant was given a contract which guarantees that once the new TCHC buildings are completed, they can return to the same size of unit they had vacated, with rent calculated the same way."

Yellow highlight: year

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Orange highlight: Full Citation

2017:

Brail, S., and Kumar, N. (2017). Community leadership and engagement after the mix: The transformation of Toronto's Regent Park. *Urban Studies*, 54(16), 3772-3788.

"Regent Park's future is premised on redevelopment and social mix."

"Social mix is assumed to result in improved socio-economic outcomes for low-income residents through: sharing of information and resources between people of different socio-economic status; a stronger sense of social control through greater accountability among community members; positive behaviour change through role modelling and mentorship between people of different socio-economic status, and higher quality local services and infrastructure through stronger collective efficacy."